

Chapter 5

THE DETERMINANTS OF PATERNAL AND MATERNAL INVOLVEMENT IN CHILDCARE

Mariana Pinho* and Ruth Gaunt

University of Lincoln, Lincoln, United Kingdom

ABSTRACT

This study tests the hypotheses derived from three theoretical approaches to the determinants of parents' involvement in childcare: economic and structural models, gender ideologies, and family systems theory. Two hundred and thirty-seven Israeli couples with three 40-month-old infants completed self-report questionnaires that measured the father's and the mother's socio-demographic and employment characteristics, gender ideologies, relationship quality and various forms of involvement in childcare. The findings provided evidence for a structural model, showing that fathers' childcare hours were negatively related to the degree of overlap between the parents' work hours. Partial support was also found for the gender ideology model, as the mother's gender attitudes correlated with her hours of care and the distribution of childcare tasks. Weak support was found for the family systems theory. The findings highlight the importance of distinguishing different forms of involvement in childcare as each is affected by a different set of determinants.

* Corresponding Author's E-mail: mpinho@lincoln.ac.uk.

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INTRODUCTION

The benefits of paternal involvement in childcare have been demonstrated in numerous studies. Research shows that increased paternal involvement in child-rearing has a positive effect on the child's development as well as on the fathers' and mothers' wellbeing. In particular, increased father's involvement facilitates the cognitive and social development of the child (Bronte-Tinkew, Carrano, Horowitz, & Kinukawa, 2008; Lamb, 2010) and improves children's educational attainment (Goldman, 2005; Lamb, 2010). For example, children whose fathers are more involved in their upbringing develop greater self-confidence and self-esteem (Flouri, 2005). Shared literacy activities have the potential to strengthen the bond between fathers and their children (Clark, Osborne & Dugdale, 2009) and fathers are among the most inspirational figures to influence children and young people to read (Clark et al., 2009). Children and adolescents with involved fathers have higher academic motivation; express more positive attitudes towards school and education; and are less likely to fail a grade, have poor attendance or exhibit behavioral problems at school (Alfaro, Umana-Taylor, & Bamaca, 2006; Mosley & Thompson, 1995). On the contrary, the lack of involved male role models in literacy related activities has been proposed as one of the causes for declining school achievement for boys (Wragg, Wragg, Haynes & Chamberlain, 1998). Involved fathers also report a greater sense of closeness to their children (Solomon, 2014), enjoy increased self-confidence, self-esteem and experience greater satisfaction from their role as a parent (Ferketich & Mercer, 1994; Hudson, Elek & Fleck, 2001). Moreover, greater paternal involvement in childcare contributes to mothers' and fathers' marital satisfaction and well-being (Pleck, 2010; Schindler, 2010).

Despite the many findings accumulated on effects of paternal involvement on the wellbeing of all family members and factors that determine levels of paternal involvement in childcare (Deutsch, Lussier & Servis, 1993; Fox & Bruce, 2001), many argue that the available evidence regarding the determinants of paternal involvement in childcare is only partial and often contradictory or inconsistent (e.g., Marsiglio, Amato, Day & Lamb, 2000). As a result, the picture that emerges from the research is still vague, and there is a need for greater clarity, depth and exploration of maternal characteristics and involvement. The research reported in this chapter is devoted to exploring parental involvement in childcare drawing on three theoretical perspectives: economic and structural approaches; family systems theory and gender ideology model. It has the advantage of focusing on both paternal and maternal involvement, enabling the investigation of dyadic mutual influences and the effect of each partner's characteristics on the other partner's involvement. Furthermore, it distinguishes between different operationalization of involvement in childcare: performance of childcare tasks and the number of hours in which each parent is the sole care provider for the child. This is done in an attempt to examine whether certain factors differentially affect different dimensions of involvement in childcare. Therefore, the focus of research presented in this chapter is on heterosexual married or cohabiting couples who have at least one child together and are currently employed. Other family structures were not included as they either do not account for cohabitating dynamics of division of family labor or do not have a history of inequality in domestic labor (e.g., same-sex couples).

THEORETICAL APPROACHES TO THE DETERMINANTS OF PARENTS INVOLVEMENT IN CHILDCARE

Several approaches from an economic perspective have been proposed to account for parental participation in housework and childcare. The principal approaches in this category are: (1) Human Capital Theory, which

assumes that the distribution of labor is based on considerations of efficiency, so that the task is allocated to the partner who can perform the chore better with smaller time investment (Becker, 1981; Bergen, 1991); (2) the Relative Resources Model (Brines, 1994), which focuses on the balance of power and external resources (e.g., income, education) between the partners and suggests that the partner who has more power will perform less undesirable tasks; and (3) the Structural Model, which centers on the relationship between the extent to which the male's participation is demanded and his ability to respond to this demand (e.g., Hook, 2012). A number of predictions were generated based on these approaches regarding the significance of the father's and the mother's respective earnings, working patterns, their education, and the number and age of the children.

Consistent with both Human Capital Theory and the Relative Resources Model, several studies have found that the greater the income and education of the father, the less his involvement in childcare (e.g., Aldous, Mulligan & Bjarnason, 1998; Caspar & O'Connell, 1998; Glass, 1998). Less is known about the effect of the mother's earnings on the father's involvement. Some studies found that the higher the mother's earnings and education, the greater the involvement of the father (Glass, 1998; Raley, Bianchi & Wang, 2012; Sullivan & Gershuny, 2016), but other studies yielded the opposite conclusion (Greenstein, 2000; Killewald & Gough, 2010).

Many studies have found that paternal involvement increases in proportion to the work hours of the mother and decreases as father's work hours increase (e.g., Aassve, Fuochi & Mencarini, 2014; Gaunt & Scott, 2014). Nevertheless, several other studies do not find such associations (Deutsch et al., 1993; Marsiglio, 1991; Yeung, Sandberg, Davis-Kean & Hofferth, 2001). It has also been found that the smaller the overlap between the respective work hours of the father and mother, the more children they have (Cabrera et al., 2000; Glass, 1998), and the younger their children's ages (Glass, 1998), the greater the father's involvement. These findings support the theory that paternal involvement is determined by the father's accessibility when needed (Caspar & O'Connell, 1998; Glass, 1998).

Although these theories explain some patterns and identify determinants in the division of family labor, in particular the number of parental work

hours, the picture that they provide is incomplete. It should be noted that these approaches are based on the assumption that domestic labor, including childcare, involves unpleasant tasks whose reward is solely extrinsic, ignoring the possibility that a person might derive intrinsic enjoyment from performing them (e.g., cooking). As a result, they do not account for other social-psychological and interpersonal factors. Furthermore, their emphasis on economic factors assume mechanisms that are independent of gender. Some theorists argue that the division of family labor cannot be fully explained without recognizing the impact of family structures, cultural and institutional contexts (Hohmann-Marriott, 2011; Sullivan, Gershuny & Robinson, 2018). Family systems theory and gender ideology model complement the economic and structural models by addressing gender, psychological and interpersonal factors and provide a complementary explanation for contradictory results.

FAMILY SYSTEMS THEORY

Family systems theory proposes that the subsystems within the family are interrelated, such that dynamics in the spousal subsystem have a significant impact on the parent-child subsystem (Aldous, 1996; Belsky, Youngblade, Rovine, & Volling, 1991). According to this theory, the emotional interactions with the partner have an impact on the overall feelings of the parent and on the extent to which he or she feels a desire to be involved in the family system. When the interaction between the couple is favorable, their responses to their children follow suit (Lee & Doherty, 2007). Conversely, negative marital interaction is associated with dysfunctional parenting (Cummings & Davis, 1994). In general, men are less able than women to separate the feelings generated by the spousal relationship from their own relationship with their children (Belsky et al., 1991); consequently, the quality of the relationship between the couple is expected to have a strong impact on the fathers' involvement in child-rearing.

Research also demonstrates that parenting practices are related to parents' marital satisfaction (Linville et al., 2010). The resultant hypothesis with respect to paternal involvement and marital satisfaction postulates that fathers who are not satisfied with their marriages will be less involved in raising their children. Several studies in fact support this hypothesis and indicate that marital satisfaction prior to the birth of the child is a predictor of the extent of paternal involvement following the birth (e.g., Volling & Belsky, 1991). Nonetheless, other studies do not find such an association (e.g., Deutsch et al., 1993).

GENDER IDEOLOGY

The gender ideology approach assumes that gender norms influence a couple's beliefs about the tasks that are appropriate for men and women and determine the division of labor within the couple (Deutsch et al., 1993). Thus, this approach suggests that women and men with traditional attitudes regarding gender will allocate chores along traditional lines such that the father takes on the role of breadwinner while the mother is responsible for childcare. By contrast, couples with egalitarian, non-traditional attitudes will allocate the chores more equally, leading to greater paternal involvement in childcare.

Several studies have in fact found an association between non-traditional attitudes on the part of the father and greater involvement in child-rearing (e.g., Aldous et al., 1998; Gaunt, 2018), but there are also studies that have not arrived at such findings (e.g., Marsiglio, 1991). Additionally, gender ideologies and attitudes are also influenced by other factors such as cultural norms, education and income level. Highly educated fathers and higher-income families are less prone to endorse traditional gender attitudes (Doucet, 2013; Karre, 2015). Deutsch and colleagues (1993), found that the gender ideology of the father prior to the birth of the child is a good predictor of his involvement following the birth, even more so than the attitudes of the mother. Findings also show that egalitarian men value the benefits of maternal employment (Kaufman & White, 2016).

OVERVIEW AND HYPOTHESES

The research literature offers three different theoretical approaches explaining parental involvement in childcare. Studies conducted so far have provided partial support for each approach, but their findings are inconsistent. Therefore, it is important to test the different approaches in one research design, which will enable us to examine the relative contribution of each theory explaining paternal and maternal involvement in childcare. The present study, therefore, tests hypotheses derived from the three economic/structural approaches, the family systems theory and the gender ideology model. In particular, the human capital theory predicts that the higher the father's earnings, and the more hours he works, the lower will be his involvement in childcare. The relative resources model predicts that the higher one partner's earnings, education and professional status compared to the other partner, the less involved this second partner will be in childcare. The structural model predicts that the father involvement in childcare will increase the longer the mother's work hours, the fewer and more flexible the father's work hours, the more children they have and the younger the children are. According to family systems theory, the greater marital satisfaction, the more involved parents will be in childcare. Finally, gender ideology model predicts that father's involvement in childcare will increase among couples who endorse egalitarian gender ideologies.

These hypotheses were tested in a sample of Israeli couples. In Israel, as in other Western-oriented countries, there has been a massive entry of women into the labor force over the last few decades (Lavee & Katz, 2003). As a result, the dual-earner family pattern has become the most frequent one, and over 80% of Jewish Israeli mothers are in the labor force (Israel Central Bureau of Statistics, 2018). In a cross-cultural comparison of attitudes toward maternal employment, only 10% of Israeli women (compared to an average of 45% in several English-speaking countries) agreed that mothers should not be employed when they have a pre-school child (Charles & Cech, 2010). In spite of these liberal views and high employment rates, Israeli women continue to bear primary responsibility for housework and childcare

(Lavee & Katz, 2003) to a similar extent as women in other Western countries (Knudsen & Waerness, 2007).

METHOD

The current study tests three different approaches in one survey design using self-report questionnaires, and which will enable us to examine the relative contribution of each of them to explain paternal and maternal involvement in childcare.

PARTICIPANTS AND PROCEDURE

Participants in the study were a convenience sample of 237 Jewish Israeli couples recruited by research assistants in both central and peripheral areas of Israel. Criteria for inclusion in the study were the following: the couples were married, both spouses were the target child's biological parents, and they had at least one child aged three months to three and a half years (parents with more than one child within this age range were asked to report on the older one). This age range was chosen for several reasons: (1) Infants are more dependent and demand more intensive care than older children, and providing care for them may be especially challenging; (2) Compared with engagement in activities with older children, providing care for infants is strongly perceived as a "woman's job", and participation of fathers is less frequent; (3) Limiting the sample to a relatively homogeneous age group enabled the use of highly detailed measures of involvement in childcare, which assumingly increased the validity of parents' reports. The decision to limit the sample to children above the age of three months was based on the assumption that assignment of family roles becomes more stable at this age, when many women return to work outside the home. The mean age of the target children in this study was 19 months.

The fathers' ages ranged from 22 to 54 ($M = 33$); the mothers' ages ranged from 20 to 45 ($M = 30$). The couples represented a broad range of socioeconomic levels. Sixty-six percent of the fathers and 77% of the mothers in the study had a college-level education, and approximately 5% of the participants had not finished high school. Ninety-one percent of the fathers and 52% of the mothers worked full-time outside the home. Presented with the average monthly income in Israel at the time of the survey (7,000 ILS), 11% of the fathers and 18% of the mothers reported that they had an average income; the income of 21% of the fathers and 53% of the mothers was below average, and the income of 68% of the fathers and 29% of the mothers was above average. Forty-nine percent of the families had one child, 27% had two children, 17% had three children, and 7% had four or more children.

PROCEDURES AND MEASURES

An initial telephone screening was conducted to ensure that families met the inclusion criteria. Upon agreeing to participate, the families were scheduled for a home visit by a research assistant. During that visit, the fathers and mothers completed comprehensive self-report questionnaires. The questionnaires included questions on their values, their routine work schedules, and their involvement in care giving activities, as well as numerous background questions, personality and attitudes measures extending beyond the scope of this particular study. The questionnaires took approximately one hour to complete.

Involvement in Childcare

There were several measures of parental involvement. First, to assess the amount of time (hours per week) that fathers spend with their infants, both the mothers and the fathers indicated the amount of time during which the fathers were the sole care provider while the mother (or any other care

provider) was away from home. Second, to assess the amount of time (hours per week) that mothers spend with their infants, both the mothers and the fathers indicated the amount of time that the mothers were the sole care provider while the father (or any other care provider) was away from home. Pearson correlations between the fathers' and the mothers' assessments of weekly hours of care were .77 for hours of care by the mother and .65 for hours of care by the father, suggesting a high level of convergent validity. The final measures of hours of care were obtained by averaging the assessments given by the father and the mother.

Childcare Tasks

Another measure asked: "Who does what?" in terms of 36 specific childcare tasks. The 36 tasks were selected to reflect those types of involvement typical of both fathers (e.g., playing, talking) and mothers (e.g., preparing food, packing child's bag). Some tasks were designed to tap physical care activities (e.g., feeding, changing diapers), some were designed to reflect responsibility for the child (e.g., choosing day care, deciding whether to take the child to the doctor), and some were selected to reflect companion (e.g., who does the child turn to when gets hurt?). Fathers and mothers were asked: "In the division of labour between you and your spouse, which of you performs each of the following tasks?" A rating of 1 indicated "almost always my spouse", a rating of 2 "more often my spouse", a rating of 3 "both of us equally", a rating of 4 "more often myself", and a rating of 5 "almost always myself." For the mothers, the scale was converse so that higher ratings indicated more participation by the father. Respondents were also given the opportunity to rate 8 "(no longer or not yet) applicable to my child" and 9 "usually performed by another person (day-care provider, grandmother, nanny)." For the purpose of further analyses, these two ratings were regarded as missing cases. The average Pearson correlation between the mothers' and the fathers' ratings for each of the 36 tasks was .53 (range .84 to .23), suggesting an acceptable level of convergent validity. The mean score for each task was obtained by averaging the ratings given by the father

and the mother for that task. An average of the 36 task ratings was calculated to create a measure of total involvement in childcare tasks. Cronbach's alpha for this measure was .93.

In order to empirically distinguish major forms of involvement in childcare tasks, a principal-components factor analysis (with varimax rotation) was completed on the 36 items. Only those items that loaded on a component at a level greater than .45 were retained. This analysis yielded a three-factor solution. The first factor relates to physical care for the infant's daily needs (e.g., feeding, changing diapers). This factor also relates to the ongoing responsibility for the performance of these daily tasks (e.g., deciding when the child should be fed). Cronbach's alpha for this factor was .92. The second factor focuses on the higher-order, indirect responsibility for the infant (e.g., choosing day care, taking the child to the doctor). Cronbach's alpha for this factor was .75. Finally, the third factor concerns the parents' relationship with the infant, including companionship (e.g., play) as well as emotional care and support (who does child turn to when upset). Cronbach's alpha for this factor was .90. This classification is closely related to two forms of parental involvement suggested by Lamb (1987) and Pleck, Lamb & Levine (1986).

The intercorrelations among involvement measures are presented in Table 1. These correlations were moderate, suggesting that the measures are relatively independent indices of involvement. It is interesting to note, that the number of weekly hours of care by the father was not related to the number of weekly hours of care by the mother. This is inconsistent with the notion that couples use fathers as care providers in order to compensate for the mother's absence due to employment.

Parents' Socio-Demographic Characteristics

The parents were asked detailed information about their work hours and work schedules, including the time invested in travelling/commuting and the time devoted to work at home. They also reported their age, religiosity,

educational level, and income. The age of the focal child and the number of children in the household were recorded.

Gender Ideologies

Both parents responded to a five-item scale designed to measure traditional and non-traditional gender ideologies (e.g., “It is best for everyone if the man earns a living and the woman takes care of the home and children, “Men and women should share housework when both are employed”). A rating of 1 indicated “strongly disagree” and a rating of 5 “strongly agree.” Responses were recoded so that a high score reflected more egalitarian attitudes toward gender. The average score for the five items was computed in order to measure the respondent’s gender ideology. Cronbach’s alphas for this measure were .69 for the fathers and .68 for the mothers.

Marital Satisfaction

Participants’ marital satisfaction was measured via the short version of Enriching Relationship Issues, Communication, and Happiness (ENRICH; Fowers & Olson, 1993). This is a 10-item Likert-type scale that assesses the respondent’s perceived quality of marriage across 10 dimensions of the relationship (spouse’s personal traits, communication, conflict resolution, financial management, leisure activities, sexuality, child rearing, relationship with the extended family, division of labor, and trust). Responses are indicated on a 7-point scale, ranging from 1 = fully disagree to 7 = fully agree. An additional item asked the participants to indicate their overall satisfaction with their marital relationship, on a 7-point scale that range from 1 = dissatisfied to 7 = extremely satisfied. An average of the 11 items was calculated to create a measure of overall marital satisfaction. Cronbach’s alpha for this measure was .78.

RESULTS

Intercorrelations among Involvement Dimensions

The intercorrelations among the different forms of involvement in childcare are presented in Table 1. Seven dimensions were examined: the father’s and mother’s relative share of physical care, companion and overall responsibility for childcare, their total share of childcare tasks, the number of weekly hours in which each of the parents is the sole care provider for the child, and the number of weekly hours of non-parental care.

Table 1. Intercorrelations among Parental Involvement Measures

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Involvement in childcare tasks							
1. Physical care	--						
2. Companion	.61***	--					
3. Responsibility	.56***	.48***	--				
4. Total involvement	.90***	.79***	.74***	--			
Hours of care							
5. Hours of father care	.38***	.27***	.35***	.38***	--		
6. Hours of mother care	-.41***	-.43***	-.31***	-.44***	-.05	--	
7. Hours of other care	.31***	.36***	.18***	.34***	-.05	-.70***	--
<i>M</i>	2.22	2.52	2.06	2.24	7.24	25.30	31.13
<i>SD</i>	.61	.49	.53	.45	5.90	16.42	16.64

Note. Tests of significance were two-tailed.

*** $p < .001$.

Among the correlations presented in Table 1, the negative correlation between the mother’s hour of care and the number of non-parental hours of care is particularly strong. Also important is the lack of correlation between the father’s hours of care and the mother’s and non-parental hours. This pattern of correlations suggests that the provision of childcare is the responsibility of the mother. For the most part, when the mother is not available for this role, she is replaced by non-parental carer rather than by the father. In this way, the care of the child is split mainly between the mother and the non-parental carer while the father remains out of the picture.

Involvement in Childcare and the Determinants Derived from Three Theoretical Approaches

Table 2 presents the correlations between the socio-demographic characteristics of the father and mother, their satisfaction with marriage, their attitudes towards gender roles, and their involvement in childcare.

The two most important factors are the mother's work hours and the number of hours in which she does not work for pay while the father is at work. Consistent with the structural model, the more hours the mother worked, the less time she spent at home alone with the children and the less she was involved in childcare tasks. Results presented in Table 2 also indicate that the more the mother worked, the greater amount of time the father spent alone at home with the child and the more involved the father was in all childcare tasks. On the other hand, the higher the number of hours in which the mother was home alone while the father was at work, the more time she spent caring for the children and the less involved in all childcare tasks was the father. Father's work hours were also related to his relative involvement and time dedicated to childcare. The more hours the father worked, the less involved in childcare tasks he was, the smaller was the number of hours he spent providing care and the more hours mothers spent alone at home.

Other important determinants are the mother's income and education level and the number of hours in which the father does not work for pay while the mother is at work. The higher education and income the mother had the less time she spent caring for the children and the more educated she was the higher was the father's relative involvement in childcare tasks. These findings are consistent with the relative resources model, and have not been frequently found before (Glass, 1998). The fathers' income and education were only related to the father's involvement in responsibility. Thus, consistent with human capital and relative resources models, the higher the father's income, the lower was his involvement in responsibility for childcare and the less hours he spent caring for his child (Caspar & O'Connell, 1998). However, the higher the father's education level, the

Table 2. Pearson Correlations between Parents' Socio-demographic Characteristics, Marital Satisfaction, Gender Ideologies and Involvement in Childcare

	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
1. Total involvement	-.19**	-.10	.09	.25***	.40***	.24***	.18**	-.38***	.22***	-.01	-.02	.12	.32***	.39***
2. Physical care	-.18**	-.03	.10	.21**	.34***	.25***	.17**	-.38***	.24***	.05	-.08	.06	.31***	.36***
3. Companion	-.16*	-.12	-.01	.19**	.38***	.14*	.07	-.27***	.13*	-.04	.02	.14*	.24***	.33***
4. Responsibility	-.15*	-.14*	.19**	.23**	.29***	.19**	.20***	-.23***	.08	-.08	.03	.16*	.30***	.29***
5. Hours mother of care	.12	-.01	.04	-.08	-.59***	-.34***	-.16*	-.51***	-.34***	.01	.06	.06	-.23***	-.38***
6. Hours of father care	-.17**	-.14*	-.04	.53***	.12	.09	.05	.06	.06	.04	.01	.02	.08	.11
7. Father's work hours	--													
8. Father's income	.44***	--												
9. Father's education	.01	.14*	--											
10. Hours father at home while mother works	-.39***	-.33***	-.08	--										
11. Mother's work hours	.04	.01	-.04	.19**	--									
12. Mother's income	.01	.20**	-.03	.17*	.46***	--								
13. Mother's education	-.06	.08	.56***	.12	.09	.10	--							
14. Hours mother at home while father works	.33***	.10	.02	.11	-.58***	-.35***	-.14	--						
15. Focal child's age	.02	.10	-.10	-.05	.25***	.21***	-.03	-.15*	--					
16. Number of children	.04	.20**	-.10	-.05	-.03	.08	-.02	.11	.10	--				
17. Father's marital satisfaction	.06	.04	.16*	-.08	-.01	.01	.09	.02	-.18**	.05	--			
18. Mother's marital satisfaction	-.01	.01	.08	.02	-.08	.01	.11	.08	-.21**	.09	.49***	--		
19. Father's gender ideology	-.03	.15*	.08	.03	.23***	.28***	.09	-.14*	.04	-.08	.16*	.09	--	
20. Mother's gender ideology	-.01	.17**	-.03	.15*	.39***	.32***	.14*	-.29***	.14*	-.09	-.05	.04	.45***	--
<i>M</i>	54.50	3.67	4.39	7.03	33.55	2.51	4.56	26.78	19.52	1.80	5.78	5.82	3.78	4.00
<i>SD</i>	16.37	1.29	.91	10.73	19.70	1.42	.81	18.21	10.86	.97	.76	.71	.72	.66

Note. Tests of significance were two-tailed.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

greater was his involvement in responsibility (Yeung et al., 2001). In general, the mothers' characteristics were more influential than the fathers' in determining parental involvement levels. The focal child's age was related to the mother's working hours, the number of hours mother spent at home alone and the mother's childcare time. The older the child was the more the mother worked, the less time she spent at home alone while the father was at work and the less time she spent on childcare. On the other hand, the older the child was the more involved the father was in nearly all childcare tasks, which is contrary to the structural model. This inconsistency can be partially explained by the average age of the focal child in our study and the importance attributed to maternal care and breastfeeding during the first years.

As shown in Table 2, marital satisfaction of each parent was related to each other, indicating that the more one partner was satisfied with their relationship, the higher the other partner's relationship satisfaction was as well. However, inconsistent with the family systems theory, the findings presented in Table 2 do not support the hypothesis regarding the associations between partners' marital satisfaction and their involvement in childcare. The only exception is the associations found between the mother's marital satisfaction and the father's involvement in companionship and responsibility. Therefore, the findings do not provide support for the family systems theory.

Furthermore, Table 2 shows that the findings are in line with the predictions derived from the gender ideology model. In particular, the more egalitarian mother's and father's gender ideologies were, the greater was father's share of childcare tasks relative to the mother's, the lower number of hours mothers spent caring for the child and less time mothers spent at home alone. However, there were no associations between the parents' gender ideologies and the father's hours of care. Additionally, mother's and father's gender ideologies were related to mother's working hours, indicating that the more mother's and father's hold egalitarian attitudes the greater number of hours mothers spent working. Finally, the more educated the mother was the greater egalitarian ideologies she expressed.

Predicting Involvement in Childcare from the Three Theoretical Perspectives

In order to determine the relative contribution of each of the three approaches to explaining various forms of parental involvement more specifically, we ran a set of multiple regression analyses. In each analysis, a variable pertaining to one form of involvement was regressed on the set of predictors derived from the three theories. The results are presented in Table 3.

To examine the contribution of the economic and structural models to explaining involvement in childcare, each of the six forms of involvement was regressed on the set of father's and mother's socioeconomic characteristics. As can be seen in Table 3, the regression equations were significant overall and accounted for 19% - 42% of the variance in parental involvement in childcare. Two of the factors—the hours in which each parent is at home while the other is at work—were significant predictors in all six equations. This means that the smaller the overlap between the father's and the mother's work hours, the greater was the father's share of childcare compared to the mother.

Additionally, father's education was a significant predictor in his involvement in two types of childcare tasks (see Table 3). The more educated the father was the more involved he was in physical care and responsibility. The child's age was also a significant predictor of father's involvement overall and particularly in tasks related to physical care and the number of caring hours by mothers. The older the child was the more the father was involved in childcare, in tasks related to physical care and the less time the mother spent caring for the child.

Family systems theory's contribution to explaining involvement in childcare was examined by regressing each of the six forms of involvement on father's and mother's marital satisfaction. As it can be observed in Table 3, only one regression equation was significant and indicated that mother's marital satisfaction was a significant predictor of fathers' involvement in responsibility and accounted for 3% of the variance. The more satisfied the mother was with the relationship the more responsibility tasks the father was

involved in. Father's marital satisfaction did not predict any form of parental involvement in childcare. However, mother's marital satisfaction was a significant predictor of father's overall involvement in childcare and his involvement in companion tasks in particular.

Table 3. Hierarchical Regression Analyses Predicting Parental Involvement in Childcare Tasks from Three Theoretical Perspectives

	Total Involvement	Physical Care	Companion	Responsibility	Hours of mother care	Hours of father care
Economic and Structural Models						
Father						
Work hours	.10	.08	-.01	.17	-.04	.08
Income	-.01	.01	.01	-.08	-.19*	-.05
Education	.15	.18*	-.03	.23*	.04	-.03
Hours father at home while mother works	.32***	.30***	.22*	.29**	-.17*	.51***
Mother						
Work hours	-.01	-.07	.14	-.12	-.02	.10
Income	-.02	-.01	-.12	.09	.03	.01
Education	.11	.06	.09	.01	-.01	.07
Hours mother at home while father works	-.53***	-.52***	-.28*	-.40**	.61***	.11
Child's age	.23**	.22**	.13	.08	-.20**	.02
Number of children	-.05	.04	-.07	-.11	.07	.03
<i>F</i> (10, 210)	8.31***	6.64***	3.24***	3.69***	9.92***	.33***
<i>R</i> ²	.38	.33	.19	.21	.42	.32
Family Systems Theory						
Father's marital satisfaction	-.10	-.13	-.05	-.05	.04	.01
Mother's marital satisfaction	.17*	.12	.16*	.18*	.03	.01
<i>F</i> (10, 210)	2.56	1.83	2.45	3.08*	.51	.05
<i>R</i> ²	.02	.01	.02	.03	.01	.01
Gender Ideology Model						
Father's gender ideology	.18**	.17*	.11	.22**	-.08	.03
Mother's gender ideology	.32***	.29***	.30***	.20*	-.35***	.10
<i>F</i> (10, 210)	27.94***	22.23***	18.55***	16.73***	22.06***	1.65
<i>R</i> ²	.19	.16	.14	.13	.16	.01

Note. Standardized beta coefficients are reported.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Finally, a regression was conducted in order to assess the contribution of gender ideology model to involvement in childcare, with each of the six forms of involvement being regressed on father's and mother's gender ideologies. Table 3 shows the majority of the equations were significant and accounted for 13% - 19% of the variance in parental involvement in childcare. Parents' egalitarian gender ideologies significantly predicted father's overall involvement in childcare and specifically in tasks related to physical care and responsibility. The more egalitarian ideologies were endorsed by parents the more the father was involved in childcare tasks and in particular physical care and responsibility tasks. Furthermore, mother's gender ideologies, predicted father's higher involvement in responsibility and a lower number of hours that mothers spent providing childcare. Table 3 indicates that the more mother's held egalitarian ideologies the more the father was involved in responsibility related tasks and the less time she dedicated to childcare. Nonetheless, neither father's nor mother's gender ideologies predicted hours of father care.

DISCUSSION

The study examined the contribution of three theoretical approaches to explaining the involvement of fathers and mothers in caring for their children. In general, the findings indicate the great importance of the degree of overlap, or lack of overlap, in the couple's work hours for parental involvement in the care of their children, thus providing strong support for the structural model. In addition, the mother's attitudes contribute to explaining the father's involvement and provide strong support for the gender ideologies model. The family systems theory received little support from the findings.

Little support was found in the present study of the family systems theory consistent with studies that do not find a link between marital satisfaction and parental involvement (Deutsch et al., 1993). However, the lack of support for the family systems theory contradicts findings from earlier studies that showed that the father's satisfaction with marriage

predicts his involvement in the care of his children (Volling & Belsky, 1991). The conflicting findings may be due to differences in the operationalization of the family systems approach in this study using only one measure, namely marital satisfaction. The examination of other aspects of relationship in the marital system, such as the existence of conflicts or stress, may have yielded other findings.

The findings from this study point to the importance of the distinction between different dimensions of involvement. The findings show that the factors that influence involvement in the performance of tasks differ from the factors that influence the hours of mother and father care. In particular, the hours of the father's supervision are related only to the lack of overlap in the couple's work hours, while the couple's involvement in the tasks and hours of mother care are also influenced by the child's age, the mother's attitudes, and father's income and education. It is therefore important to apply this distinction to future research as well.

CONCLUSION

Overall, the findings shed light on the importance of including multiple factors when investigating parental involvement in childcare. They allow us to understand how structural factors such as paid work hours interact with gender ideologies to shape parents' involvement in childcare. These findings provide evidence for addressing couples' ideologies as well as developing workplace policies to support a more balanced division of family labor and greater gender equality in the family.

The weakness of this study lies in its cross-sectional design, which does not provide certainty in the causal direction of the relationships between the variables. In order to overcome this weakness, future research should adopt a longitudinal design in which the predictive factors will be measured during the first pregnancy of the woman, and the involvement in childcare will be measured a few months after birth. Such a design will ensure the temporal order and will enable us to conclude more confidently about the direction of causality. Another limitation of the study is its sample being characterized

by an over-representation of highly educated couples. The findings should, therefore, be considered with caution, as less-educated couples from a lower socioeconomic background may be more restricted in terms of their choices of childcare and employment. In particular, families where two incomes are absolutely necessary can have a restricted range of choices despite their beliefs or preferences. Furthermore, all the measures relied on self-report recall measures that could be subject to social-desirability concerns and reduced reliability. Previously research exposed that partners tend to overestimate their own contribution to household labour or underestimate each other's contribution (Lee & Waite, 2005). Future research would benefit from including time diaries and direct observations in the home setting.

Overall, the findings from this study strengthen the accumulating evidence of the important role played by structural constraints alongside with couples' gender ideologies in their involvement in childcare (Deutsch et al., 1993; Gaunt, 2018). Results suggest that equality at home and higher involvement in childcare by the father, might be related to the lack of overlap in the couple's work hours and the extent to which they hold egalitarian ideologies, believing that both parenting roles are more similar than different.

Considering the results from the current study, policymakers should attempt to increase paid benefits and financial incentives that would encourage fathers to take parental leave. Consequently, by taking parental leave alone, fathers are more likely to develop egalitarian parenting beliefs and develop parenting skills (Wall, 2014) while allowing mothers to be active in the labour market. Educators and practitioners developing parenting programs should generate awareness of structural constraints and the importance of paternal involvement in childcare as well as addressing parents' gender ideologies. By understanding the barriers and facilitators that can increase parental involvement, parents can be informed of the possible changes and adaptations they can make to face the greater demands of the labor market. It is also essential that educators highlight the impact of parents' involvement in their child's life and emphasize the valuable impacts of father's involvement in children's development (e.g., Lamb, 2010).

Moreover, educational courses targeting parents would benefit from demonstrating how parents' well-being can benefit from father's involvement in childcare (Pleck, 2010; Schindler, 2010).

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